

G-D'S FOOD

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Pinchas

G-d's Food

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Sponsored by
Patrick and Sally Carreia
in honor of
the birthdays of mother Anna,
son Joel, and daughter Ann Elisha

Today's Learning:
Nach: Tehilim 147-148
Uktzin 3:11-12
Complete the Six Orders of Mishnah today;
Begin Masechet Berachot on Sunday
O.C. 505:1-506:2
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Shevuot 6
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Kilayim 33

The Midrash Rabbah on our parashah comments on the verse (28:2), "My offering, My food for My fires"--Rabbi Yitzchak asked: Does G-d eat or drink? Learn from the angels, about whom it says (Tehilim 104:4), "His attendants [are] flaming fires." From where are they (the angels) sustained? Rabbi Yudan said in the name of Rabbi Yitzchak: From the glow of the Shechinah, as it is written (Mishlei 16:15), "In the light of the king's countenance is life." Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: It is written [in our parashah--28:6], "It is the continual elevation-offering that was done at Har Sinai." If you think that I [G-d] eat and drink, learn from Moshe, about whom it says (Shmot 34:28), "He remained there with Hashem for forty days and forty nights -- he did not eat bread and he did not drink water." If I [G-d] ate and drank, Moshe, too, would have eaten and drank. [Until here from the midrash]

R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l (1843-1917; Yerushalayim) writes: The midrash is teaching us that the essence of a sacrificial offering is the feeling that one is nullifying his material being and burning it on the altar. [The animal is merely a proxy for that which the person bringing the offering should imagine is happening to himself.] After all, G-d certainly does not need our "food."

R' Yadler continues: The midrash recognizes that we cannot comprehend G-d. Therefore, how do we know that He does not eat? The answer is that mankind can comprehend angels; indeed, some of the prophets--for example, Daniel--describe seeing angels. From our own observation that angels have no physical needs, we can deduce that their Master, Hashem, certainly has no physical needs. (Tiferet Zion)

"Pinchas, son of Elazar, son of Aharon Hakohen, turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael, when he zealously avenged Me among them, so I did not consume Bnei Yisrael in My vengeance." (25:11)

R' Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg z"l (rosh yeshiva in Berlin and Switzerland; died 1966) observes that a kana'i / one who acts zealously to defend G-d's honor must have pure motivations. That is why Moshe did not kill Zimri himself. Chazal say that when Moshe rebuked Zimri for consorting with a Midianite, Zimri retorted, "And who gave you permission to marry a Midianite woman?" Of course, Moshe's case was different, for Moshe married Tzipporah before the Torah was given. Nevertheless, in his humility, Moshe feared that if he killed Zimri, he might derive even a tiny bit of satisfaction from taking revenge on the person who insulted him.

Moreover, if Moshe had killed Zimri, cynics might have perceived it as an attempt to erase his own shame at having married a Midianite. Or, perhaps such a motivation might even sneak into Moshe's heart, however subtly. Moshe was afraid of this, so he did not act. That is why Bnei Yisrael rebuked Pinchas by mentioning that he too had Midianite blood. They said, "Are you holier than Moshe? He did not trust his own motivations, but you do?"

To this the Torah answers, "Pinchas, son of Elazar, son of Aharon Hakohen" -- Man does not always know what motivates him, but Hashem does. Pinchas did not do this as the grandson of Yitro, but rather as the grandson of Aharon. (Lefrakim p. 608)

"Moshe spoke to Hashem, laimor." (27:15)

We are used to verses that say that Hashem spoke to Moshe "laimor," meaning that Hashem instructed Moshe to repeat Hashem's words to Bnei Yisrael. But what does it mean that Moshe spoke to Hashem "laimor"? Our Sages explain that this is one of the three occasions on which Moshe demanded an answer from G-d.

Why was Moshe so forceful regarding the matter of appointing a successor? [Surely Moshe knew that Hashem would not abandon Bnei Yisrael when Moshe died.] Nevertheless, explains R' Elya Meir Bloch z"l (co- founder and co-rosh yeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland) due to Moshe's great concern for Bnei Yisrael, he wanted to have the opportunity to pass on to his successor whatever information it was necessary for him to know. (Peninei Da'at)

"May Hashem, Elokim of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly; who shall go out before them and come in before them, who will lead them out and who will bring them in; and let the assembly of Hashem not be like sheep that have no shepherd." (27:16-17)

Rashi z"l comments: "Who will lead them out"--safely, through his merits. "And who will bring them in"--safely, through his merits.

R' Yerucham Levovitz z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the Mir Yeshiva; died 1936) observes: We learn from Rashi's comment that the Jewish idea of leadership is very different from the world's idea of leadership. A Jewish leader is not someone who uses his power to command others to do his will. A Jewish leader is one who carries the entire congregation on his shoulders, who is ready to give up his own merits [i.e., the reward for his own good deeds] for the well-being of his charges. (Da'at Torah)

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Take to yourself Yehoshua son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, and lean your hand upon him'." (27:18)

"He leaned his hands upon him and commanded him . . ." (27:23)

Why did Moshe place *two* hands on Yehoshua's head when Hashem only commanded him to use one hand? R' Chaim Yosef David Azulai z"l (Chida; 1724-1806) explains:

Rashi explains that the story of the appointment of Yehoshua follows the story of the daughters of Tzelofchad because once Moshe was discussing laws of inheritance with Hashem, Moshe thought it would be an appropriate time to ask that the mantle of leadership be passed to his own sons. Hashem responded, however, that He had a different plan: Yehoshua would succeed Moshe.

When Moshe blessed Yehoshua, he wanted to demonstrate that he had no hard feelings because of Hashem's decision, Chida writes. Therefore he blessed Yehoshua more than Hashem had commanded.

To what is this analogous? The Gemara (Bava Metzia 22a) states that if a farmer appoints an agent to separate terumah from the farmer's produce, the agent should designate terumah from the medium-quality produce. If, however, the agent designated high-quality produce as terumah, and

the farmer saw him and said, "Why don't you take the best stuff as terumah?" the law is as follows: If there is in fact no better produce than what the agent took, then we treat the farmer's question as being sarcastic, and the agent's action is deemed to be unauthorized. Therefore, the "terumah" that the agent separated is in fact not sanctified. But, if there actually is better produce, then the farmer is understood to be approving the choice of high-quality produce as terumah, and the terumah is sanctified. Like Moshe Rabbeinu in our verse, by giving more than necessary, the farmer demonstrates that he is pleased with the outcome. (Quoted in Torat Ha'Chida)

Shabbat: Seeing Good in Everything

"A psalm, a song for the Sabbath day. It is good to thank Hashem and to sing praise to Your Name, Exalted One; to relate Your kindness in the dawn and faith in You in the nights." (Tehilim 92:1-3)

R' Mattisyahu Solomon shlita (mashgiach ruchani of Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, N.J.) writes: Shabbat is set aside as a time when one can readily reflect on Hashem's goodness. Indeed, the foundation of the mitzvah of oneg Shabbat is that through eating delicacies and enjoying other physical pleasures one will recognize Hashem's desire to do good for His creations -- to cause them to feel fortunate and happy and to provide them with all types of good things. This, in turn, will lead a person to acknowledge and thank Hashem, and to recognize that One who is so good must be all good. Although we often fail to understand how His actions are good -- indeed, some of His actions appear to us to be bad -- we are capable of recognizing that He is inherently good. It is only due to our short-sightedness that we do not see that all He does is a result of His goodness. This is the song of Shabbat.

R' Solomon continues: Yet, how can we ignore what is "obviously" bad and tell ourselves it is good? He explains, quoting his teacher R' Elya Lopian z"l (1872-1970): Imagine that a person is walking along the road and sees well-manicured gardens befitting a king or wealthy noble. This person would likely assume that the palace behind these gardens is similarly ornate. Much to his surprise, however, once he passes through the gardens he finds that the palace is a gutted, half-wrecked shell. How can this be? A thinking person would conclude that the palace is merely being renovated. Similarly, when Hashem appears to do bad, it is because He is "renovating" and improving His world. If one would focus on the overall goodness of Hashem's deeds, he would not question those of His deeds that appear to mankind to be destructive or cruel; he would understand that they are part of a carefully formulated, mathematically precise plan.

In the Aleinu prayer, we begin by praising Hashem and acknowledging that "He is our Elokim; there is none other." We then pray, "Therefore, we put our hope in You, Hashem, our Elokim, that we may soon see Your mighty splendor." What does the second part have to do with the first part? R' Lopian explains that after we have recognized in the first part of Aleinu that Hashem is Master of everything, we pray in the second part that we should merit to see the results of His plan, when the "renovation"

of the world will have been completed. (Matnat Chaim: Shabbat p.103)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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